FAILED ROMAN!

HOW ROMAN SCRIPT FAILS TO REPRODUCE IMPORTANT INDIAN SOUNDS AND NEEDS TO BE REDESIGNED.

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Introduction to the Comic Book

H Kumar Vyas

Is English an Indian Language ?

This comic book should be read in the spirit of a message. It is a message addressed to those of you who, along with your own language, also use English as medium of communication; both in speech and in writing. As such, English becomes an integral part of your daily work routine. You use it with almost the same facility as your own language, whether in school or college, at your work place, when communicating among friends or sometimes even with the members of your family.

English is no more treated as foreign language in India. Many people think that this is because it has been a historical legacy from India's past foreign rulers. This may be partly true. But the real, and far more important, reason is that today it has become the most popular linguistic medium of international communication. Because of this, English has been accepted as an integral part of India's educational system. And learning English besides one's mother tongue has now become an accepted norm for school going children.

Inexcusable Failures

And yet most of us who speak and write English are unaware of inexcusable failures that occur when important sounds from the Indian phonetic system are transliterated in Roman script. That is, the script in which English is written.

But before we discuss these failures, a word about transliteration. We all know what translation is. It is the process by which we relate two languages semantically to each other. On the other hand, there is a process that phonetically relates, or transfers, the sound system of one script to that of the other. And that is called transliteration. To put it simply, what happens in transliteration is the transformation of sounds of words from one script into those of the other. (A very simple example: Translation of बाला in English would be 'a girl', but its transliteration in Roman script would be, 'b a l a'.)

Why do these failures occur? It is mainly because in the English phonetic system there is no provision for faithfully reproducing several distinct sounds that are typical of the Indian phonetic system. When any of these sounds is found missing, the accepted practice is to bring in a 'quick fix' substitute. This substitute is the nearest existing sound from the English phonetic system. Unfortunately, it never works. Every one of these efforts results in either a frustrating ambiguity or still worse, an unfortunate misunderstanding leading to loss of original meaning. In any other country this kind of neglect would have been considered intolerable and an insult to the indigenous language or languages.

Object of the Comic Book and the NID Project

So the object of both the print and online versions of this comic book is to serve as an effort toward creating a general awareness to this problem. The immediate aim is to make people aware of typical failures that occur in transliteration and encourage them to think of possible remedies. This is exactly what the characters in the comic book are seen doing with help of leading questions. The book has been designed keeping in mind those people who as a rule speak, read and write more than one language; English being one of them.

In fact this very effort is an integral part of a larger and thoroughly comprehensive project that is being perused at the moment at the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad, India. The project systematically addresses the failures discussed in this comic book in the spirit of a design problem. The efforts are on to work out appropriate solutions. As this is the first phase of the project, the target groups have been identified for their close acquaintance with two writing systems or scripts: Devanagari and Roman. In next phases to follow, one expects similar exercises for other major scripts of India.

Indianise the Roman Script!

A final word of caution. There is a remote possibility that some people might misinterpret this exercise and the special design project at NID as an effort to *Romanise* Indian scripts. We make this point because there have been misguided efforts of this nature in the past especially during the time of the British. If at all, our present effort goes on to prove that what is needed is exactly the opposite which is, to *Indianise* the Roman script. A redesigned Roman script that should allow English to assimilate those 'missing' sounds which are essentially Indian and thus move one step nearer to the phonetic systems of Indian languages.

H Kumar Vyas
Honorary Research Fellow
National Institute of Design

FAILED ROMAN!

This is a story that concerns us all.
It is not about people, and not about places either.
Though they both play an important part in our story.

Let us say it is a story that invites us to meet an important idea. You may even call it a cause that has been overlooked.

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https://archive.org/details/failedromanhowro00vyas

OUR STORY TAKES PLACE IN A CITY SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTHERN PART OF **INDIA**.

IT IS MORNING,
THE CITY WAKES UP...

---AND SLOWLY COMES TO LIFE WITH THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND THE SOUND OF TRAFFIC.

PARBAT COMPLEX

काव्या क्लिनिक
KAVYA CLINIC

नीलकमल टेलर्स
NEELKAMAL TAILORS
DRY-CLEAN - SUNDAY CLOSED

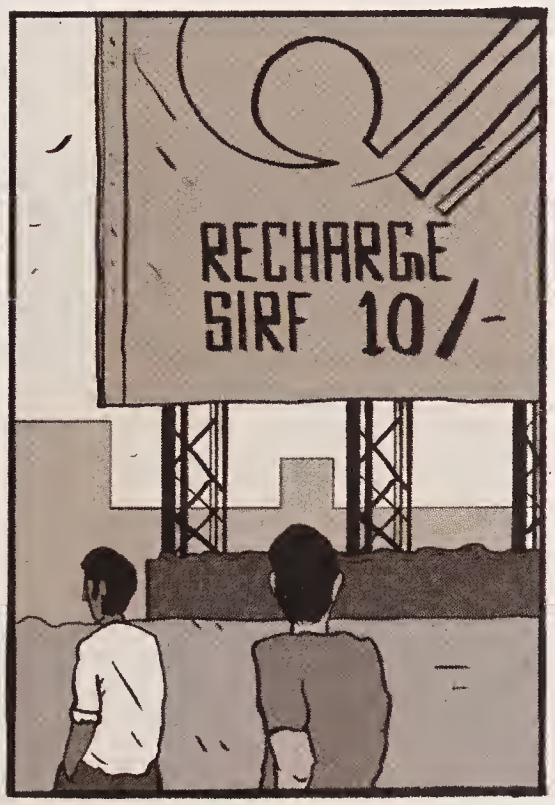
AKASH
ELECTRICALS

लवीना पान

गौमुख दुग्ध
GOWMUKH MILK CO-OP

पत्र

TAXI
टैक्सी


RECHARGE
SIRF 10/-

AUTO!

ENTER OUR ANCHORS...

BUS DEPOT
बस डेपो

IS THERE NO HINDI WORD FOR 'DEPOT'?

"HAS THE WORD BEEN TRANSLATED AS IT IS?"

HMM... ?

YOU MEAN 'TRANSLITERATE'.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT **TRANSLATION** IS, WE TRANSLATE WHEN WE **TRANSFER THE MEANING** OF WHAT IS **WRITTEN** OR **SAID** IN ONE LANGUAGE TO THE OTHER LANGUAGE.

मैं तुम सबको ख़तम कर दूंगा

SAME MEANING, DIFFERENT LANGUAGE AND OR SCRIPT.

I WILL FINISH YOU ALL !

YOU MEAN WHEN TWO LANGUAGES ARE RELATED **SEMANTICALLY**.

RIGHT---

---BUT WHEN WE TRY AND REPRESENT THE **SOUNDS** OF WORDS FROM ONE **SCRIPT** TO THE OTHER, IT BECOMES **'TRANSLITERATION'**.

BUS DEPOT

2m

बस डेपो

2म

SAME SOUND, DIFFERENT SCRIPT.

YOU MEAN WHEN TWO LANGUAGES ARE RELATED **PHONETICALLY**.

OH, OUR BUS IS HERE.

KNOW Your ANCHORS!

NOW THAT YOU HAVE MET THE ANCHORS KNOW MORE ABOUT THE

IN HIS LATE THIRTIES, IS A PROFESSOR OF ***LINGUISTICS*** AT THE UNIVERSITY. INTERESTS INCLUDE HISTORY, CURRENT AFFAIRS, CULTURE AND MUSIC.

IS AN ARTS STUDENT IN HER MID TWENTIES. STUDIES AT A CITY COLLEGE. INTERESTS INCLUDE LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND THE ARTS.

NEXT: IS ENGLISH AN INDIAN LANGUAGE?

ENGLISH IS ALL AROUND US ISN'T IT? THE BUS DEPOT SIGN WAS TRANSLITERATED NOT BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF AN EQUIVALENT, BUT SEEMED LIKE AN **ACCEPTED CONVENTION**. WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS...

"FOR NEARLY TWO HUNDRED YEARS, ENGLISH HAD BEEN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INDIA'S ERSTWHILE BRITISH RULERS..."
"...WHO LEFT IT AS A LEGACY."
WELL, THAT'S THAT OLD CHAP. WHAT SAY WE HAVE A HOT CUPPA AND THEN FLOG SOME BULL, EH?
BUT THE SECOND AND MORE IMPORTANT REASON IS THAT TODAY, IT HAS BECOME THE MOST POPULAR LINGUISTIC MEDIUM OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION.
HELLO, THIS IS SAM HERE HOW MAY I HELP YOU?
SAMEER

" ENGLISH HAS ALREADY BEEN **ACCEPTED** AS AN **INTEGRAL** PART OF INDIA'S **EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**---"

PAY ATTENTION NOW---

Factorizing
$4x^2 + 12xy + 9y^2$
we get (2x

UMMM---

"---HENCE, LEARNING ENGLISH **BESIDES** ONE'S MOTHER TONGUE HAS NOW BECOME AN **ACCEPTED** NORM FOR SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN."

जल्दी भाग बे , नहीं तो **लेट** हो जाऐंगे , वैसे भी **स्कूल** की **बस** तो **मिस** हो चुकी है !

AND SO, AS YOU RIGHTLY POINTED OUT EARLIER, OVER THE YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASING USE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN **EVERYDAY LIFE**.

"IT'S USE IS EVIDENT IN ALL KINDS OF **MESSAGES, SIGNS** AND **INFORMATION**..."

KIDHAR HAI BE ? JALDI PAHUNCH IDHAR

Bhakti Sagar
REST
VEGETARIAN AND No

←1 & 2 प्लेटफार्म PLATFORM

THAT IS ALSO WHY ENGLISH HAS TO **REPRESENT KEY INDIAN SOUNDS** AND WORDS IN DAILY USE.

चैतन्य नगर CHAITANYA NAGAR 10

अशोक किराना
ASHOK KIRANA

AND THAT IS WHERE ROMAN SCRIPT COMES IN...

...AND **TRANSLITERATION BECOMES ESSENTIAL!**

BY THAT YOU MEAN WORDS IN **HINDI** **TRANSLITERATED IN ENGLISH**, IS IT NOT?

हिन्दी ↓ HINDI

YES, JUST LIKE THAT '**KHAU GALI**' SIGN THERE; OR THE '**KIRANA**' SIGN THAT WENT BY.

AND IS THE **ROMAN** SCRIPT SAME AS THE **ENGLISH** SCRIPT?

खाउ गली
KHAU GALI
26 m

WELL, **ENGLISH** IS ALWAYS WRITTEN IN **ROMAN SCRIPT** AND SO ARE MOST OF THE **EUROPEAN** LANGUAGES.

POOF!

ABCDE

WHILE **DEVANAGARI** IS OF COURSE, THE SCRIPT USED FOR WRITING **SANSKRIT, HINDI, MARATHI** AND SEVERAL OTHER **NORTH INDIAN** LANGUAGES.

अ आ इ ई

ISN'T DEVANAGARI A '**PHONETIC**' SCRIPT? WE ALWAYS SEEM TO **READ IT EXACTLY THE WAY IT IS WRITTEN**. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO RULES; UNLIKE ROMAN SCRIPT.

YES, YOU ARE RIGHT; AND THAT COULD ALSO BE **ONE** OF THE REASONS FOR THE **FAILURES** THAT OCCUR IN TRANSLITERATION FROM DEVANAGARI TO ROMAN SCRIPT.

F-A-I-L-U-R-E-S?

YES, **FAILURES**. AND THE REAL CULPRIT FOR THESE FAILURES IS THE **ENGLISH PHONETIC SYSTEM**. IT CANNOT **FAITHFULLY REPRODUCE** SOME OF THE MOST TYPICAL SOUNDS OF THE INDIAN PHONETIC SYSTEM.

TAKE FOR EXAMPLE THE WORD गली AS IN---

गली

"---IN ROMAN SCRIPT IT WOULD BE SPELT AS---"

G-A-L-I

"---AND WE KNOW THAT IN INDIA, THE SAME WOULD BE PRONOUNCED EITHER AS---"

गली

OR

गाली

"---MEANING A LANE---"

"---MEANING AN ABUSE-"

"NOW WITH THE SECOND MEANING,

'खाउ गाली'

WOULD MEAN

'EATING ABUSE'-"

NOT A VERY POLITE EXPRESSION, IS IT?

I GUESS NOT.

RIGHT, BUT THEN... OH, OUR STOP IS HERE.

NEXT: FAILURES ALL AROUND...

BOHRA SUPPLIES

MADHU ENTERPRISES

LAKSHMI TAILORS

LOOK! THERE'S ARUN BY THE TOY STORE.

HAVEN'T I MET HIM BEFORE ? ISN'T HE AT THE CITY COLLEGE OF ARTS?

YES, STUDYING GRAPHICS. OH, HE'S SEEN US.

HI GUYS, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TALKING ABOUT?

WELL...

OH, THIS IS INTERESTING. BUT I DONT KNOW IF THESE FAILURES ARE VISIBLE IN *EVERYDAY LIFE*...

OF COURSE THEY ARE: TAKE THIS SIGN FOR INSTANCE. IN THE WORD **नारायण**, BOTH **न** AND **ण** ARE REPRESENTED ONLY WITH AN '*N*'.

नारायणसिंह रोड 3
NARAYANSIMHA RD

THOUGH BOTH SOUND QUITE DIFFERENT.

"YES, AND IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE WORD, **सिंह**, '*M*' TOTALLY FAILS TO REPRESENT THE SUBTLE AND LOVELY NASAL SOUND OF THE '*ANUSVARA*'."

नारायणसिंह रोड 3
NARAYANSIMHA R

"THE WHAT ?"

"THE DOT WE PLACE ON TOP OF A CHARACTER FOR *NASAL* EMPHASIS; THE *BINDU*."

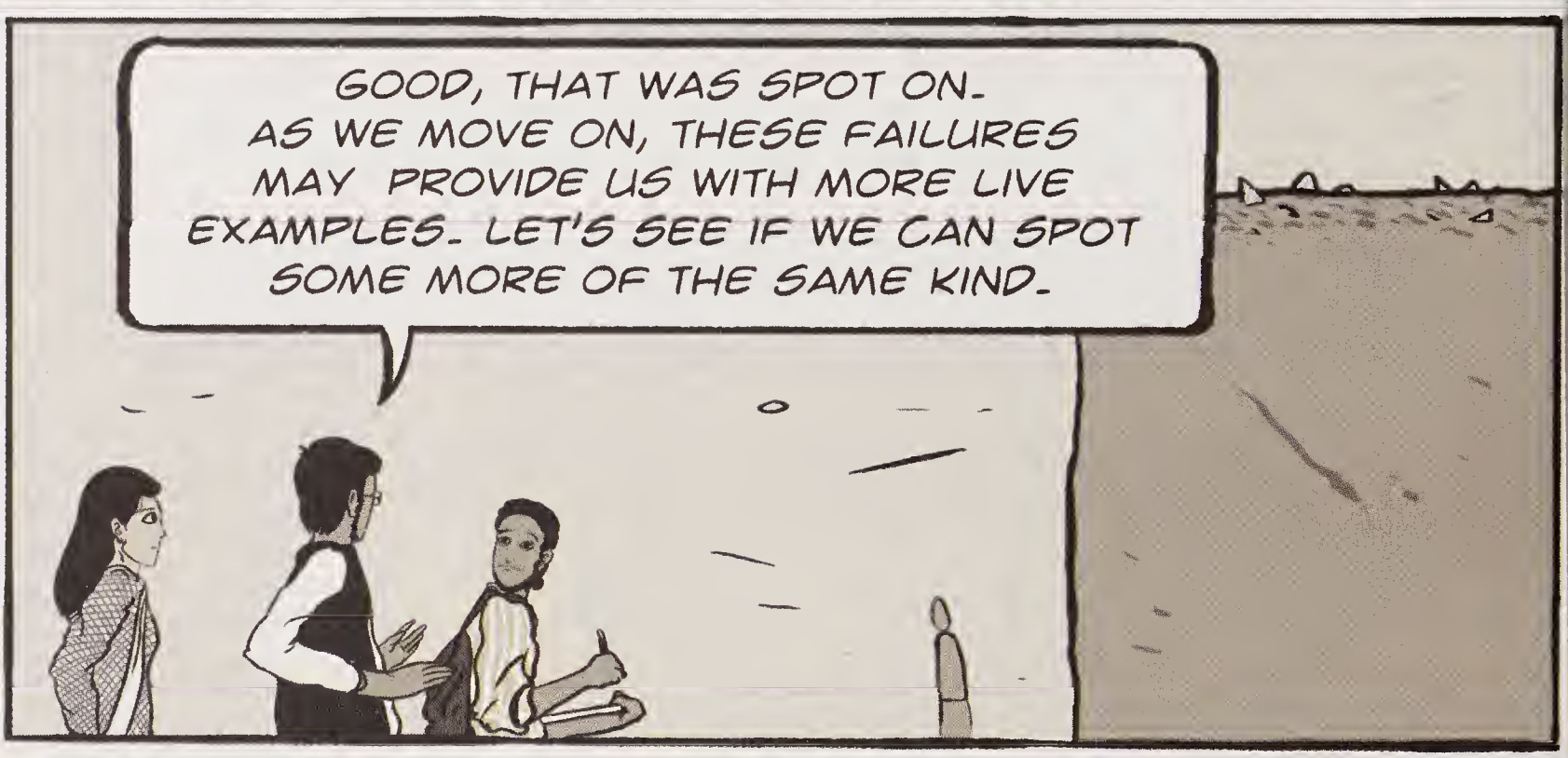
THIS ISN'T A ONE OFF EXAMPLE. THESE FAILURES *SURROUND* US. THAT IS ENOUGH REASON TO WARRANT OUR ATTENTION TO IT.

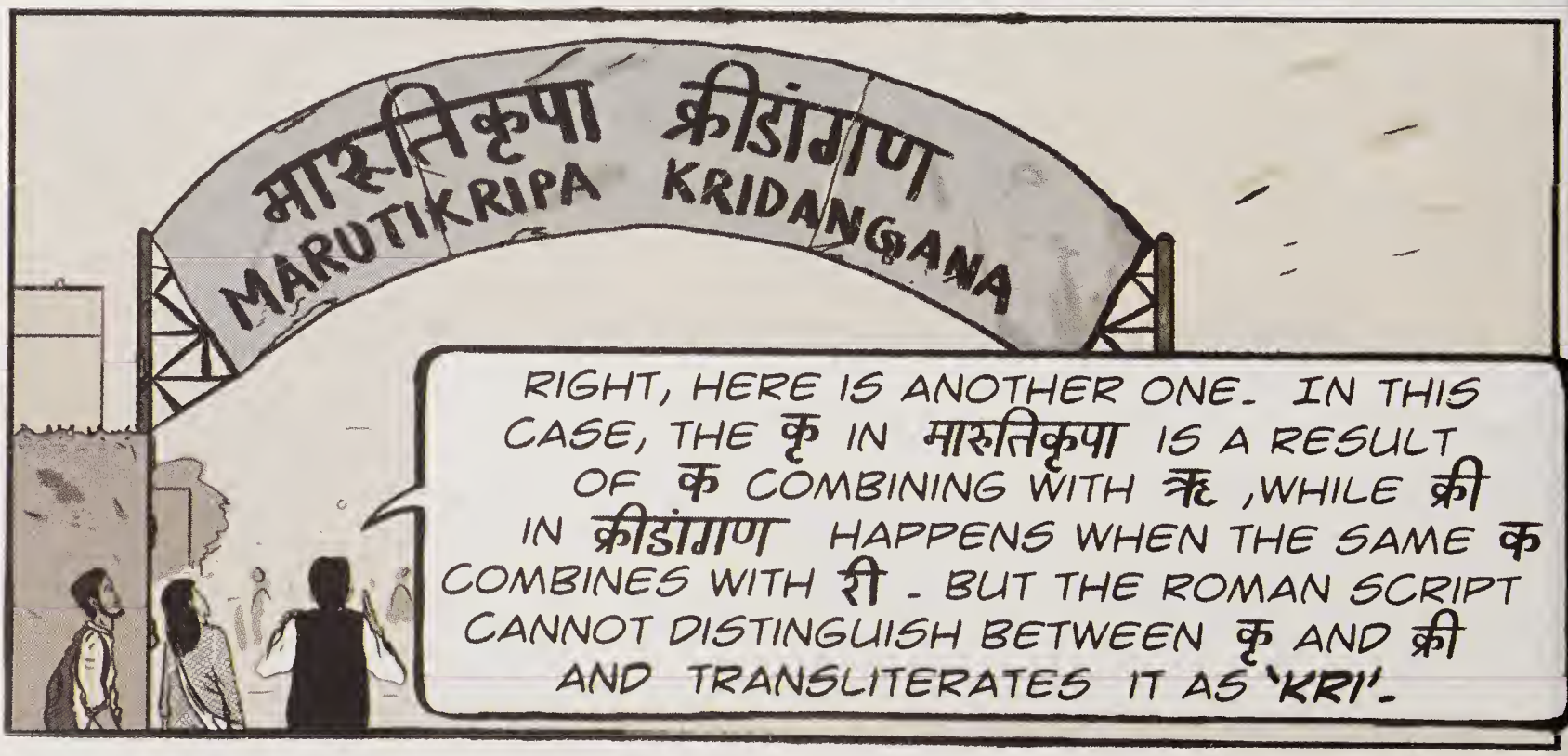
IN FACT, WE CAN PICK OUT ALMOST ALL THE MAJOR FAILURES FROM *LIVE EXAMPLES* AROUND US...

REALLY?

WOW, THIS SOUNDS INTERESTING; I AM GOING TO TAG ALONG IF YOU DON'T MIND.

पुष्पेश्वर आश्रम
PUSHPESHWAR ASHRAM
ESTD 1936
LOOK, I THINK I GOT ONE HERE. QUITE EASY, BOTH ष AND श IN पुष्पेश्वर ARE TRANSLITERATED AS 'SH', THOUGH THEY ARE PRONOUNCED DIFFERENTLY.


GOOD, THAT WAS SPOT ON. AS WE MOVE ON, THESE FAILURES MAY PROVIDE US WITH MORE LIVE EXAMPLES. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN SPOT SOME MORE OF THE SAME KIND.


मारुतिकृपा क्रीडांगण
MARUTIKRIPA KRIDANGANA
RIGHT, HERE IS ANOTHER ONE. IN THIS CASE, THE कृ IN मारुतिकृपा IS A RESULT OF क COMBINING WITH ऋ, WHILE क्री IN क्रीडांगण HAPPENS WHEN THE SAME क COMBINES WITH री . BUT THE ROMAN SCRIPT CANNOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN कृ AND क्री AND TRANSLITERATES IT AS 'KRI'.

NOW LET ME TRY, YES! WHAT ABOUT THIS, 'DAUD ALMAULA'?

WHAT ABOUT IT?

दाउद अलमौला

DAUD ALMAULA

WELL, THE औ SOUND IN अलमौला AND आउ SOUND IN दाउद ARE BOTH TRANSLITERATED AS 'AU'.

EXCELLENT, BUT WE ARE JUST GETTING STARTED... WHAT ABOUT THE DENTIST HERE?

DID YOU NOTICE THAT THE SAME VOWEL ऐ IN ऐहिक AND चैतन्य IS TRANSLITERATED IN TWO WAYS: 'EI' AND 'AI'.

KH

ऐहिक चैतन्य देशपांडे

EIHIK CHAITANYA DESHPANDE

DENTIST - DENTAL SURGEON

9AM - 12PM / 6PM - 9PM MON - SAT

SUNDAY CLOSED

AND WHAT ABOUT दै AND डे IN देशपांडे ? THEY BOTH END UP AS 'DE'!

HERE IS A QUICK ONE, CAN YOU SPOT A FAILURE HERE?

HMM---

सरिता तट
SARITA TATA

OK, LET ME THINK. SEE, HERE WE HAVE TWO DISTINCT SOUNDS त AND ट COMING TOGETHER TO FORM A SINGLE WORD तट . AND YET 'TA' STANDS IN FOR BOTH त AND ट , ENDING UP IN A RIDICULOUS SOUNDING WORD 'TATA'! ALSO ता IN सरिता MEETS THE SAME FATE.

सरिता तट
SARITA TATA

VERY GOOD, NOW I SEE A FAILURE IN THIS TAILOR SHOP SIGN, DO YOU?

शैलेश मेराई
SHAILESH MERAI
TAILOR – SUITS - ALTER

THAT IS EASY, IT IS SIMILAR IN NATURE TO DAUD ALMAULA. IN THIS CASE, ऐ IN शैलेश AND आई IN मेराई ARE BOTH TRANSLITERATED AS 'AI'.

संयुक्त कृषि संघ
SANYUKTA KRISHI SANGH
AGRICULTURAL CO-OP

CAN YOU SPOT A FAILURE HERE?

IS IT THE 'ANUSVARA' AGAIN?

YES. EARLIER, WE HAD 'M' TRYING TO PERFORM THE FUNCTION OF THE ANUSVARA AND FAILING BADLY. HERE WE HAVE 'N' FAILING EQUALLY BADLY. ANYWAY, BOTH 'M' AND 'N' ARE NOWHERE NEAR THE SUBTLE AND LOVELY SOUND OF THE अनुस्वार.

संयुक्त कृषि संघ
SANYUKTA KRISHI SANGH
AGRICULTURAL CO-OP

GREAT! I SEE THAT WE ARE GETTING A LITTLE MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE FAILURES. LET'S HEAD TOWARDS MANORAMA PLAZA, THERE IS SOMETHING I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT...

WELL, HERE WE ARE...

"BOTH THE PLAZA AND THE BUILDING YOU SEE HERE ARE PARTS OF A MEMORIAL. THE PLAZA IS CALLED गौरव चौक, AND THE BUILDING IS मनोरमा रामन स्मृतिगृह - SO HERE YOU SEE THE NAMES WITH THEIR TRANSLITERATIONS. WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

गौरव चौक
GAURAV CHOWK

मनोरमा रामन स्मृतिगृह
MANORAMA RAMAN SMRITIGRUHA

OK, AS I SEE HERE, BOTH गौरव AND चौक HAVE THE SAME VOWEL औ - IT HAS BEEN TRANSLITERATED DIFFERENTLY AS 'AU' AND 'OW'.

गौरव चौक
GAURAV CHOWK

THAT'S RIGHT, NOW THE **NEXT** ONE IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF THE ROMAN SCRIPT'S **INABILITY** TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN अ AND आ, **TWO KEY** INDIAN VOWELS.

YOU SEE, IN OUR SOUND SYSTEM IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONFUSE रमा, AS IN मनोरमा WITH राम, AS IN रामन - AND LOOK HOW BOTH HAVE BEEN TRANSLITERATED AS ONE SINGLE WORD 'R-A-M-A' IN ROMAN SCRIPT!

मनोरमा रामन स्मृतिगृह
MANORAMA RAMAN SMRITIGRUHA

OK, BUT SPEAKING OF आ, WHY CAN'T IT BE TRANSLITERATED AS 'AA'? I SEE IT BEING DONE ALL THE TIME, IN MOVIES, PUBLICATIONS, MEDIA...

YES, I HAVE SEEN IT TOO, BUT AS SOON AS WE HAVE MORE THAN ONE आ IN A WORD, THE CONVENTION DOES NOT WORK. LET US TAKE A FEW COMMOM INDIAN NOUNS. THE CITY OF **वाराणसी** IS JUST VARANASI AND **NOT** VAARAANASI **प्राणायम्** IS **NEVER** PRAANAAYAM. AND **आकांक्षा** REMAINS AKANKSHA BUT **NEVER** AAKAANKSHAA.

"LET US ALSO EXAMINE THE CASE FOR अ . THE ENGLISH PHONETIC SYSTEM HAS NO PROVISION FOR A PURE अ SOUND. VOWEL 'A' STANDS SOMETIMES FOR आ BUT MOSTLY FOR ए AND ONLY IMPLICITLY FOR अ ."

A = ए

A = अ

A = आ

"ON THE OTHER HAND, ONE HEARS THE **SOUND** OF A HIDDEN 'अ' IN MANY ENGLISH WORDS. NOTICE THAT NONE OF THESE WORDS HAVE AN '**A**', YET ONE HEARS AN 'अ' EVERYTIME!"

UP	———	अP
SON	———	SअN
MERCY	———	MअRCY
ROUGH	———	RअGH
EARTH	———	अRTH

COMING BACK TO 'SMRITIGRUHA', IT IS A COMPOUND WORD MADE OF TWO NOUNS, SMRITI AND GRUHA. HERE BOTH '**RI**' AND '**RU**' WHICH ARE IN FACT TRANSLITERATIONS OF A SINGLE VOWEL SOUND ऋ, HAVE ENDED UP IN CREATING AN AMBIGUOUS SITUATION.

स्मृतिगृह

SMRITIGRUHA

WELL, THAT WAS QUITE SOMETHING, I MUST ADMIT. I NEVER GAVE IT MUCH THOUGHT, BUT NOW IT DOES SEEM OBVIOUS REALLY.

DOESN'T IT? ANYWAY, LET'S GET SOME TEA...

राजेश टी स्टा
RAJESH CHAIWA

IT SEEMS THAT I'LL NOW BE CONCIOUSLY LOOKING OUT FOR THESE FAILURES...

RAJESH CHAIWAL

THERE IS ONE THING THAT I HAVE TO ASK. THESE FAILURES OF ROMAN SCRIPT. HOW DO THEY **AFFECT ME**? WHY SHOULD **I BOTHER** ABOUT THEM?

WELL...

ANNA HAZARE ZINDABAD!

ANNA HAZARE ZINDABAD!

ANNA ZINDABAD!

अन्ना हम तुम्हारे साथ है!!!

अण्णा जिंदाबाद!

ANNA IS INDIA!

CORRUPTION MUST

राजेश टी स्टाल
RAJESH CHAIWALLAH

अण्णा जिंदाबाद!

ANNA IS INDIA

अन्ना हम तुम्हारे साथ है!

WHAT'S ALL THIS?

IT'S ANNA HAZARE'S SUPPORTERS.

IN THE ANTI-CORRUPTION PROTEST.

I THINK WE ARE CLOSE TO THE MAIDAN NOW. SHALL WE GO SEE THE GATHERING?

SURE, WHY NOT?

NEXT: ANNA HAZAR HAI.

AT THE JANLOKPAL AGITATION---

WELL, THIS IS SOMETHING!

भ्रष्टाचार को अत्म करो!

LET'S TRY TO GET TO THE FRONT.

CORRUPT!

MAIN ANNA HOON!

HMM---

LOOK!

16 अगस्त से अन्ना अन्न का संदंतर त्याग करेगा !!!

ALSO LOOK AT THAT!

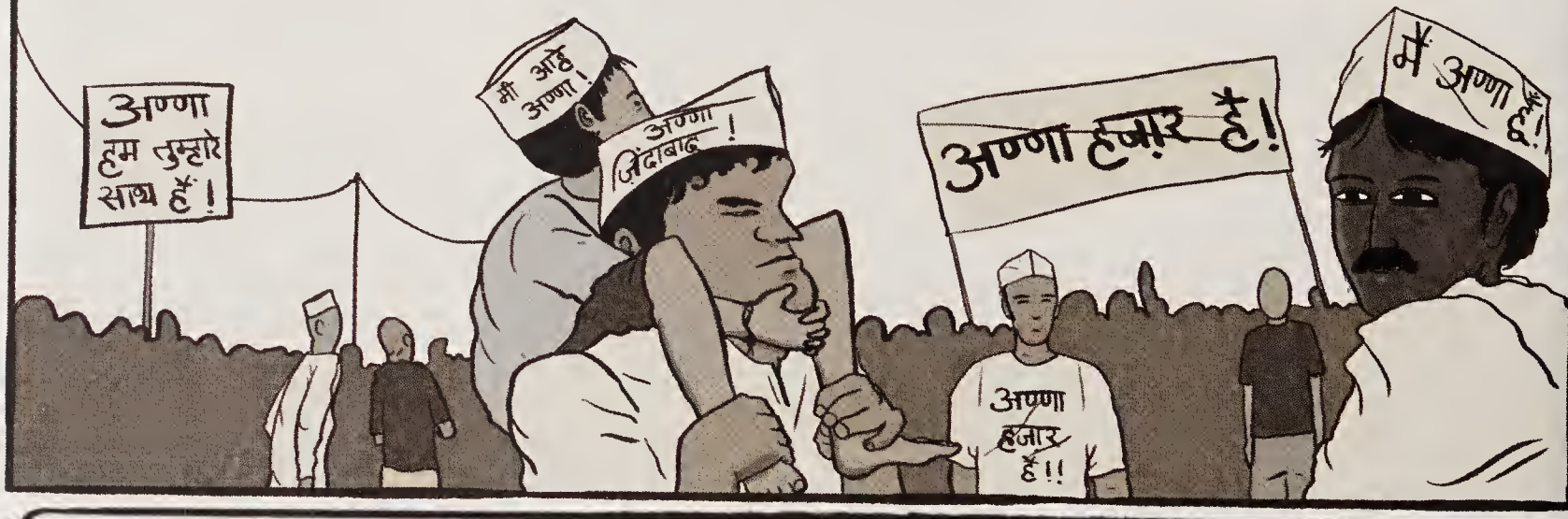
16 AUGUST SE ANNA ANNA KA SADANTAR TYAG KAREGA!

WELL THAT WAS SOME EXPERIENCE! I'M GLAD WE CAME.

SO YOU WERE WONDERING HOW THESE FAILURES **AFFECT** US ALL ? DID YOU NOTICE A FAILURE THAT HAPPENED RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES?

NO, I DON'T THINK I DID.

"YOU SEE, अण्णा IS ORGINALLY A **MARATHI** WORD MEANING AN **ELDER**. IT IS ALSO FOUND IN SEVERAL SOUTH INDIAN LANGUAGES..."



"...THANKS TO THE RECENT ANTI CORRUPTION MOVEMENT, THE WORD TRAVELLED TO OUR PART OF NORTHERN INDIA. NOT KNOWING ANY OF THESE LANGUAGES , PEOPLE HERE MUST DEPEND ON ITS **TRANSLITERATION** IN ROMAN SCRIPT..."

"SO WHEN THE ROMAN SCRIPT, WHICH DOES NOT HAVE A ण SOUND , GIVES US A–N–N–A, WE RE–TRANSLITERATE IT IN DEVANAGRI AND END UP WITH अन्ना ."

NOT JUST THAT; A–N–N–A MUST ALSO STAND IN FOR अन्न *. QUITE A MIX–UP! WHAT CAN ONE DO ABOUT THAT?

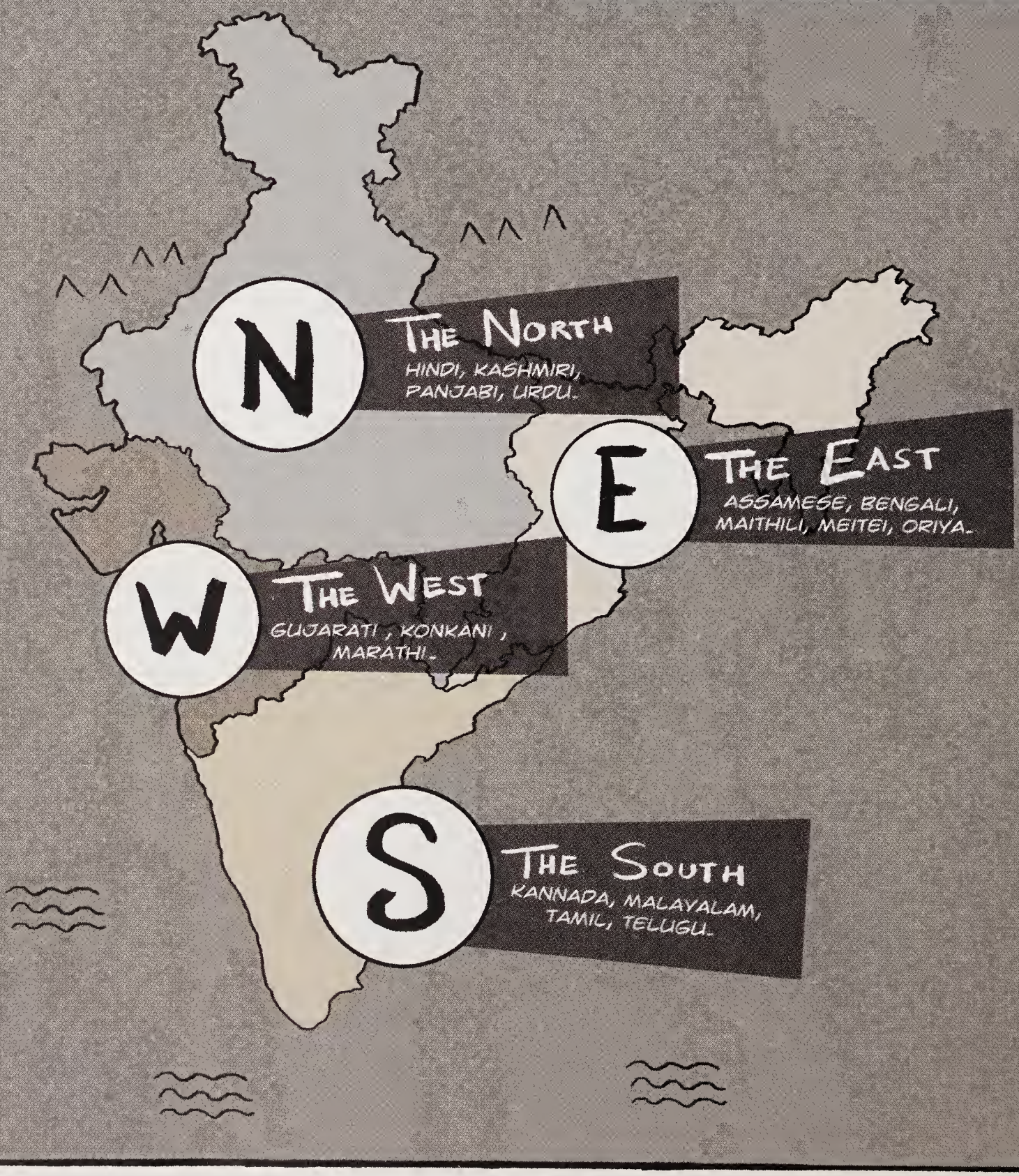
WE AS PEOPLE SEEM TO SUFFER FROM TWO KINDS OF WEAKNESSES. FIRSTLY, WE ARE **GULLIBLE** AND **ACCEPT** WHATEVER ROMAN SCRIPT WITH ALL ITS FAILURES TRANSLITERATES FOR US...

* MEANING FOOD

"...AND SECONDLY, COMMON PEOPLE LIKE US LIVE THEIR LIVES IN **COMPARTMENTS**. ESPECIALLY **PROVINCIAL** AND **LINGUISTIC** COMPARTMENTS."

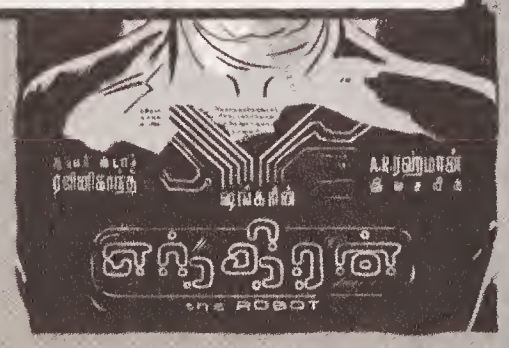
"HINDI AND MARATHI ARE WRITTEN IN THE SAME SCRIPT, AND YET WE DO NOT BOTHER TO CHECK THE RIGHT SPELLING OF A TYPICAL MARATHI WORD, अण्णा !"

16 MAJOR LANGUAGES
12 SCRIPTS

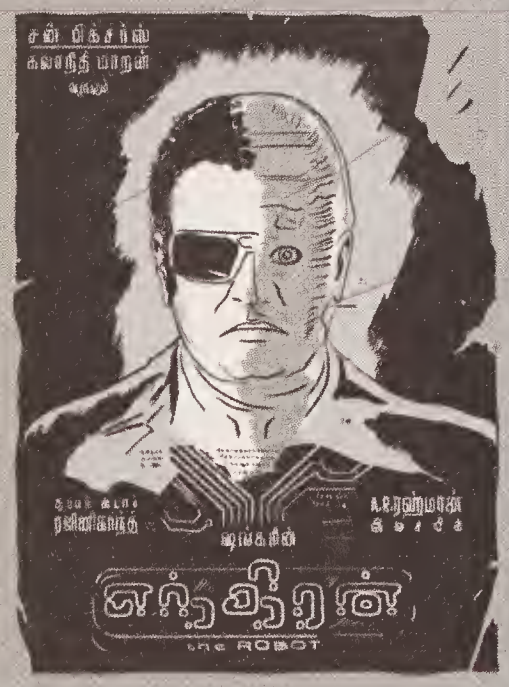


WE MAY NOT LIKE IT BUT THE FACT IS THAT TODAY ONLY THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE WITH ROMAN SCRIPT HAS BEEN ABLE TO FORM SOME KIND OF **WORKING LINK** AMONG THE MAJOR LANGUAGES OF INDIA.

THINK OF **OTHER** INDIAN LANGUAGES **NOT WRITTEN** IN DEVANAGARI.



HERE IS AN OLD POSTER FOR RAJNIKANTH'S LAST FILM 'ROBOT', BUT DO ANY OF YOU KNOW WHAT THE TAMIL SCRIPT IS SAYING?



SURE, I READ IT IN THE PAPERS, ITS '**ENDHIRAN**'.

NO I SAW IT ONLINE, IT'S '**ENTHIRAN**'!

"THE TAMIL SCRIPT IS UNIQUE AMONGST SOUTH INDIAN LANGUAGES IN THAT THERE IS ONLY **ONE** CHARACTER FOR THE TWO DENTAL CONSONANTS त AND द - ONE HAS TO KNOW THE EXACT WORD TO KNOW WHICH SOUND NEEDS TO BE USED."

MATRA (इ)

நந்திரன்

ந - SOUND OF A - ऐ (AE)

ந்் - SOUND OF N - न

த் - SOUND OF T/D - त / द

ர - SOUND OF R - र

ன் - SOUND OF IN - इन

"SO FOR OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES NOT WRITTEN IN DEVANAGARI, THE TREASURE OF THEIR WORDS AND SOUNDS CAN TRAVEL TO THE REST OF THE COUNTRY ONLY THROUGH THE FAULTY TRANSLITERATIONS OF THE ROMAN SCRIPT."

"BY THE TIME THEY REACH THEIR DESTINATIONS THEY WOULD BE OPEN TO ALL KINDS OF WRONG PRONUNCIATIONS AND MISINTERPRETATIONS."

"HERE IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THIS."

A FEW GUJARATI URBAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, DECIDED TO FORM A DISCUSSION GROUP AND NAMED IT બુધ્ધીમાન નું જુથ, WHICH IN GUJARATI WOULD MEAN, 'INTELLECTUALS COLLECTIVE'.

બુધ્ધીમાન નું જુથ

FOR SOME REASON, THE SIGNBOARD OUTSIDE THEIR MEETING PLACE CARRIED ONLY THE ENGLISH TRANSLITERATION OF THE THE GUJARATI NAME WHICH READ...

BUDDHIMAN NU JUTH —

CLAP CLAP

VERY SOON THERE WERE PROTESTS FROM THE NEIGHBOURS WHO WANTED THE BOARD REMOVED. BECAUSE THE ENGLISH WORDS, WHEN RE-TRANSLITERATED IN GUJARATI WERE READ AS...

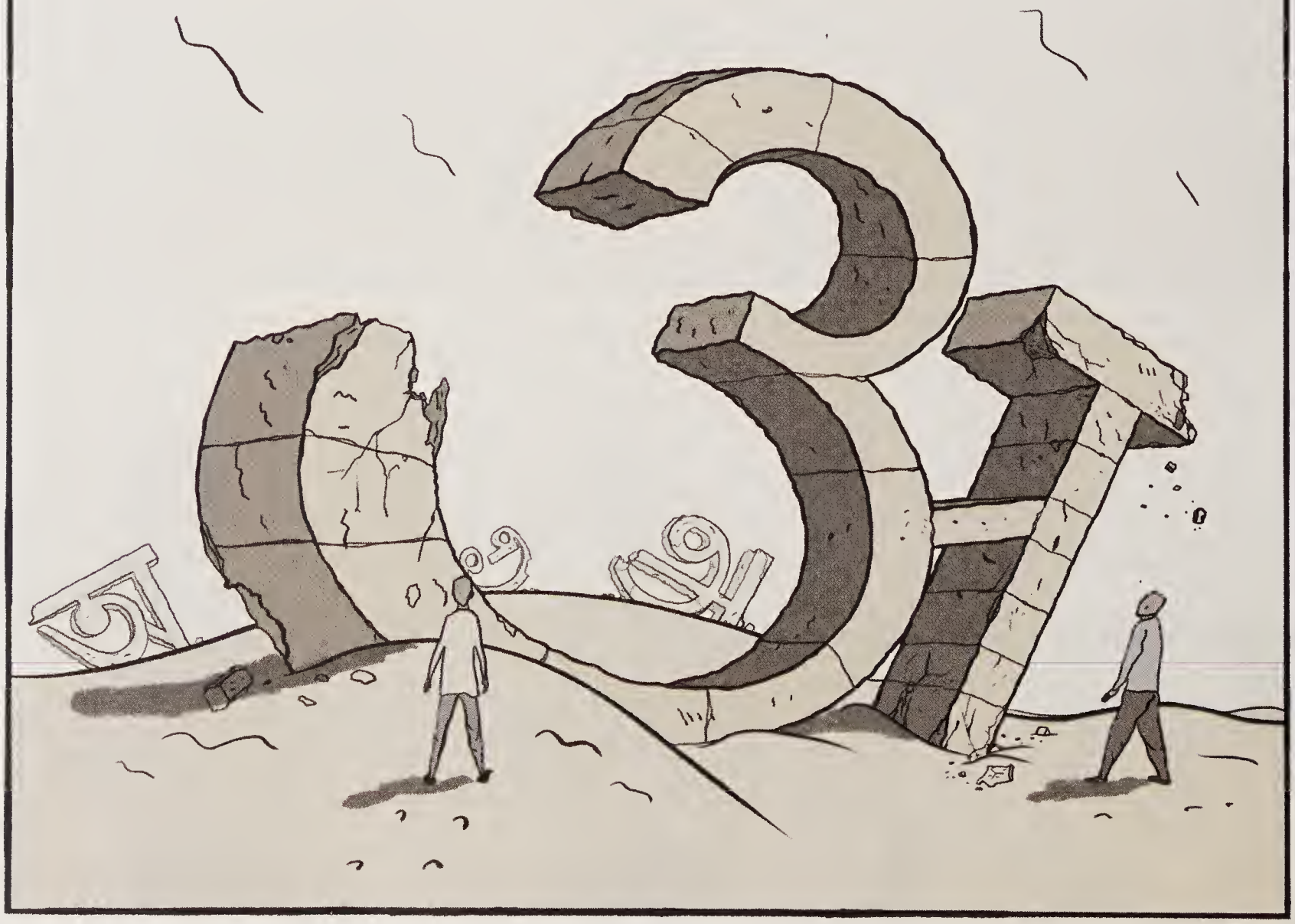
બુઢ્ઢીમાં નું જુઠ ??

OLD MOTHER'S LIES ??

BUDDHIMAN NU JUTH —

JUST THE WAY IT HAPPENED WITH ANNA, IT CAN CREATE SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND AMUSING MIX-UPS...

"THAT IS RIGHT.
BUT THINK OF THE LONG TERM DAMAGE.
ONE CAN SEE A GRADUAL DETERIORATION OF
ALL THESE ORIGINAL INDIAN SOUNDS AS THEY
END UP WITH COMPLETELY WRONG PRONUNCIATIONS.
AND THIS IN TURN MAY CAUSE A FURTHER
EROSION OF INDIA'S HERITAGE,
WHICH IS HER **TREASURE OF
LIVING LANGUAGES.**"



BY THE WAY, THIS IS HAPPENING FOR THE FIRST TIME TO THE INDIAN PHONETIC SYSTEM IN ITS ENTIRE HISTORY OF **3000** YEARS.

BUT ISN'T ANYONE DOING ANYTHING TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

"BESIDES INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS, A SERIOUS AND CON-
-CERTED EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM THROUGH A LIVE PROJECT AT THE **NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN**. THE PROJECT AIMS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM THOROUGHLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY."

राष्ट्रीय डिज़ाइन संस्थान
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN

SPEAKING OF 'ANNA', CHECK THIS OUT.

HA!

MISS KOURNIKOVA
I PRESUME

I AM ALSO ANNA!

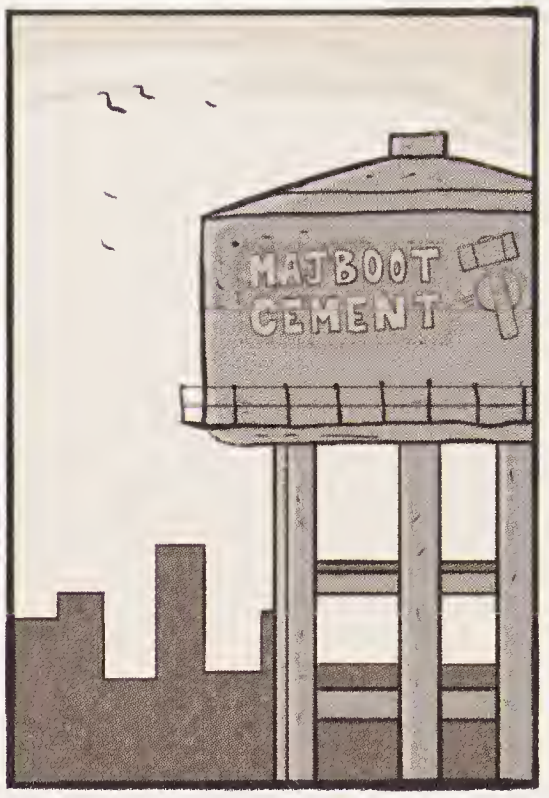
NEWS
EXPRESS

WELL, THAT SAYS IT ALL!

SEEMS LIKE AN APT CONCLUSION TO THIS JOURNEY.

AARTI
STORE

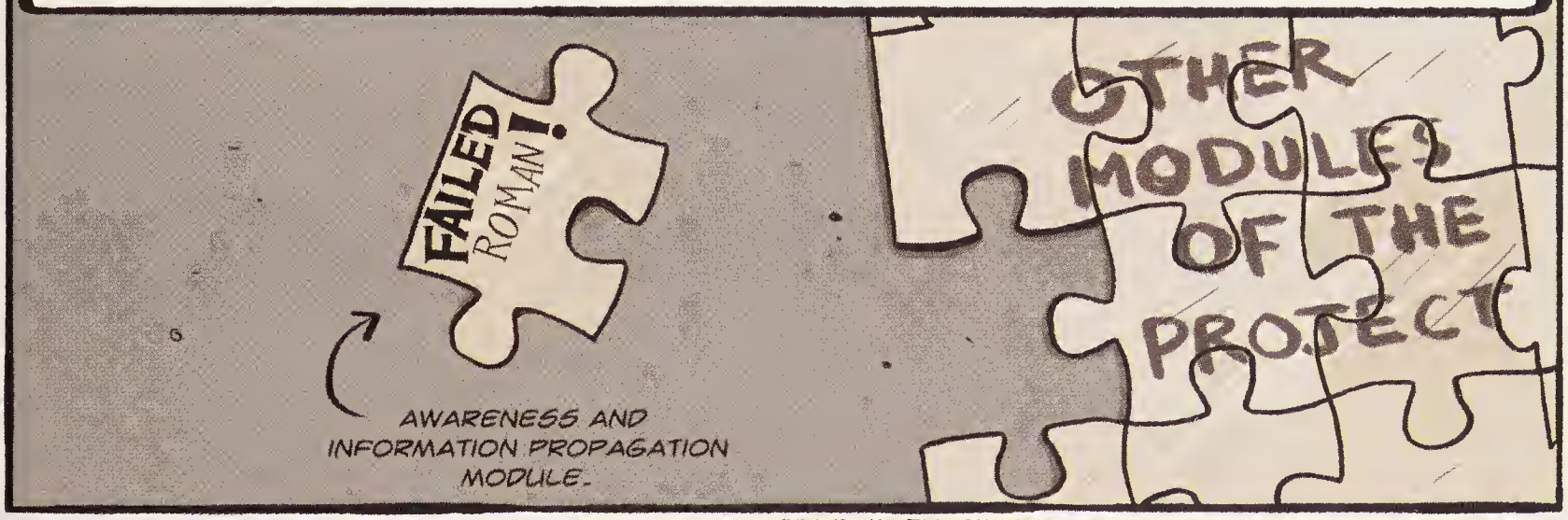
ANNA
ZINDABAD


MAJBOOT
CEMENT

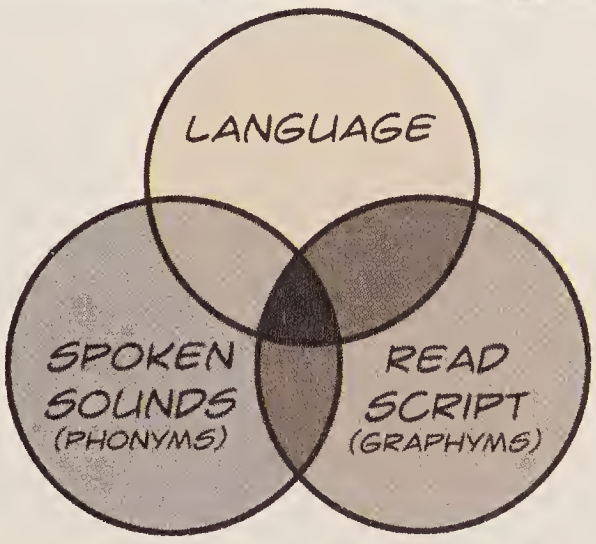
AFTERWORD

WE HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE COMIC BOOK, 'FAILED ROMAN'. THIS IS ALSO THE TIME TO LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE OF WHICH THE BOOK IS ONLY A PART.

"AS MENTIONED EARLIER, THIS BOOK IS A SMALL OFFSHOOT OF A MUCH LARGER PROJECT THAT IS BEING PURSUED AT THE **NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN** (NID), AHMEDABAD, INDIA."



"THE GENERAL AIM OF THIS LARGER PROJECT IS TO ADDRESS A WELL DEFINED AREA OF **LINGUISTIC TRANSLITERATION.**" *



* REF PAGE 4,5

"IN PARTICULAR, IT CONCENTRATES UPON THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTED WHILE TRANSLITERATING SOUNDS OF THE INDIAN PHONETIC SYSTEM IN ROMAN SCRIPT AS A VEHICLE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE."

बुद्धि → BUDDHI

"WHILE DOING SO, IT METICULOUSLY EXPLORES TO IDENTIFY THOSE **FAILURES** THAT INVARIABLY OCCUR DURING THE PROCESS OF TRANSLITERATION."

बुद्धि TRANSLITERATION BUDDHI

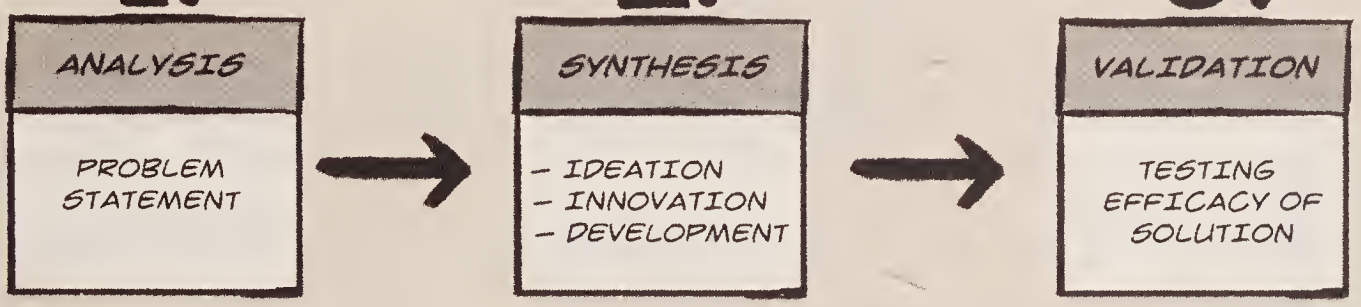
Re-transliterate

बुद्धि ?

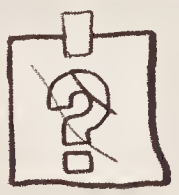
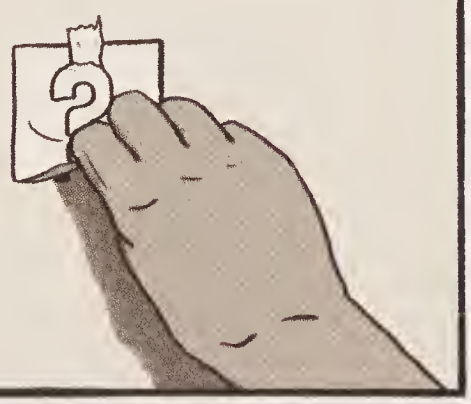
INCIDENTALLY, MOST OF THESE FAILURES ARE THE SAME AS DISCUSSED IN THIS COMIC BOOK.

HERE IS A QUICK ONE, CAN YOU SPOT A FAILURE HERE ?

"THE LATER PART OF THE PROJECT SEEKS OUT THE ROOT CAUSES OF THESE FAILURES WHICH IN TURN ARE CONVERTED INTO WELL DEFINED PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED IN A '**DESIGNERLY**' SPIRIT."



"IT IS ACCEPTED THAT THE EVENTUAL SOLUTIONS WILL EMERGE AS SPECIFIC NUMBER OF **NEWLY DESIGNED CHARACTERS** TO BE ADDED TO THE PRESENT ROMAN SCRIPT. EFFORTS ARE ON AT THE MOMENT TO WORK OUT CONCEPTS THAT SHOULD LEAD TO FINAL SOLUTIONS."

DEVANAGARI CHARACTERS	CURRENT EQUIVALENT	NEW CHARACTERS
अ	A	
आ	A	
ए	A	

THIS PARTICULAR EFFORT AT THE NID SHOULD IN FACT BE SEEN AS THE ***FIRST PHASE*** OF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE ENTERPRISE. IN THE NEXT PHASE ONE MAY EXPECT A SIMILAR EXERCISE FOR THE ***REST OF THE MAJOR SCRIPTS*** OF INDIA. THERE ARE ABOUT ***ELEVEN*** MAJOR INDIAN SCRIPTS BESIDES DEVANAGARI.

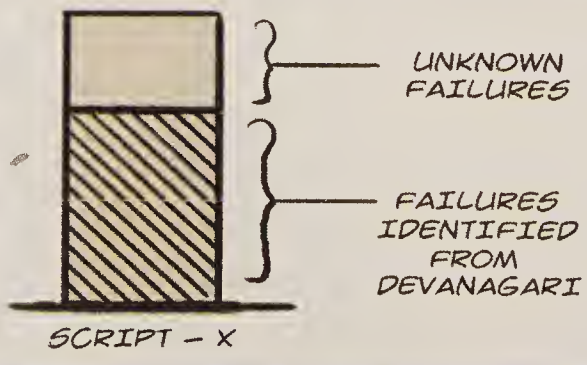
GURUMUKHI BENGALI TELUGU MALAYALAM KANNADA TAMIL URDU

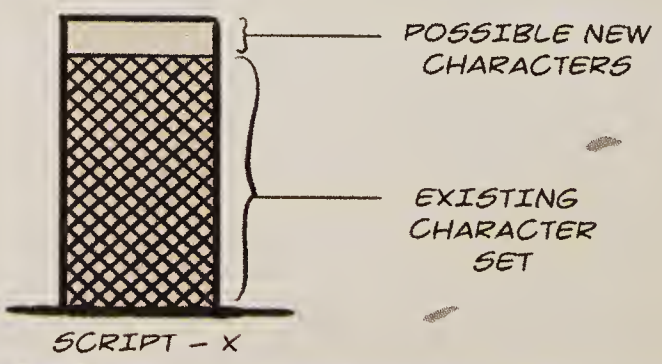
"THE TASK MAY NOT BE AS FORMIDABLE AS IT SEEMS AT THE FIRST GLANCE. FIRSTLY, THE ENCOURAGING FACT IS THAT THESE SCRIPTS BELONG TO THE ***INDIC PHONETIC SYSTEM*** AND FOLLOW A COMMON WRITING SYSTEM OF ***ALPHASYLLABLES*** WITH FEW LOCAL CHANGES."

ALPHABET — K (LETTER) — REPRESENTS SELF (CONSONANT)

ALPHASYLLABLE — क (LETTER COMPOSED OF) — [क् (CONSONANT) + अ (VOWEL)]

"SECONDLY, ALL THE FAILURES IDENTIFIED IN DEVANAGARI DURING THE PROJECT ***EXIST*** IN MOST OF THE MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES AND ARE REFLECTED IN THEIR RESPECTIVE SCRIPTS. EACH OF THESE SCRIPTS MAY HAVE ***VERY FEW EXTRA FAILURES*** TO TACKLE WITH FOR WHICH NEWLY DESIGNED CHARACTERS MAY BE ADDED TO ROMAN SCRIPT."





THIS COMIC BOOK IS BEING PUBLISHED ALONG WITH ITS ONLINE VERSION WHICH CAN BE FOUND AT **WWW.NID.EDU/RESEARCH/TRANSLITERATION.** THEY BOTH ACT AS COMPLEMENTS TO EACH OTHER. THE ENTIRE PROJECT IS MEANT TO BE AN INVITATION TO ALL ***SERIOUS PRACTITIONERS*** OF MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES WHO ARE CONSCIOUS OF THE VERY FAILURES DISCUSSED HERE.